DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 622 CG 024 440

AUTHOR Duckenfield, Marty; Swanson, Lorilei
TITLE Service Learning: Meeting the Needs of Youth At Risk. A Dropout Prevention Research Report.
INSTITUTION National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson, SC.
PUB DATE Jun 92
NOTE 31p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Department, The National Dropout Prevention Center, 205 Martin St., Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634-5111.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *At Risk Persons; *Dropout Prevention; Elementary Secondary Education; Program Content; Program Effectiveness; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Service Learning

ABSTRACT

Service learning has been found to be a potentially powerful dropout prevention tool. Service learning combines community service with learning activities. Participating students must be engaged in significant, well-planned, and genuine service. Second, they must reflect on their experiences of serving others to ensure a complete learning experience. These requirements are vital to a successful service learning experience. Many favorable outcomes occur in each of the following developmental areas through participation in service learning activities: personal growth; social growth; intellectual growth; citizenship; and preparation for the world of work. Service learning can be integrated into the organizational structure of a school through four progressively complex levels of implementation: extracurricular; curricular unit; mandatory or elective courses; and school-wide integration. Essential components of service learning include preparation, action, and reflection. The service learning continuum can be implemented at all grade levels. Research has shown that the integration of service learning into the school curriculum is an extremely effective strategy in meeting the many developmental needs of all students. Service learning is a teaching methodology that revitalizes the classroom and provides the kind of learning and experiences students need to lead a successful life. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED318622

SERVICE LEARNING

CG024440

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Smink

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

©1992 National Dropout Prevention Center

The National Dropout Prevention Center is a partnership among concerned leaders who represent educational and policy interests, business and Clemson University, created to reduce America's dropout rate. The Center is committed to meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations by shaping school environments to ensure that all youth receive the quality education to which they are entitled.

For more information contact:

The National Dropout Prevention Center

205 Martin Street

Clemson University

Clemson, SC 29634-5111

(803) 656-2599

SERVICE LEARNING:

MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH AT RISK

MARTY DUCKENFIELD
LORILEI SWANSON

JUNE 1992

A Publication of the National Dropout Prevention Center

Table of Contents

About the Authors 4

Preface 5

Chapter One

Introduction 6
Definition of Service Learning 7
Rationale 7

Chapter Two

Integrating Service Learning into the Curriculum 11
Level One: Extracurricular 11
Level Two: Curricular Unit 11
Level Three: Mandatory or Elective Courses 11
Level Four: School-Wide Integration 12

Chapter Three

Essential Components of Service Learning 13
Preparation 13
Action 14
Reflection 15

Chapter Four

The Service Learning Continuum 17
Elementary Schools 17
Middle Schools 18
High Schools 19
Service Learning Activities for Grades K-12 20

Chapter Five

Service Learning Research 21
Conclusion 23

Appendices

Publications 24
Organizations 25
References 26

About the Authors

Marty Duckenfield received her undergraduate degree in History from Bates College and her master's in Nutritional Science from Clemson University. A former teacher, she now serves as the Information Resource Coordinator for the National Dropout Prevention Center. In this capacity, she manages the FOCUS Database and Resource Materials Library located on-site. Additionally, she has been involved in the development and evaluation of a local cross-age tutoring project which gained substantial national recognition.

Based upon these experiences and with her involvement with young people aged 10-18 in a youth-operated community theatre, Marty has witnessed firsthand how regarding young people as resources rather than problems can have an extraordinary impact on young people and their communities. She has become a proponent of service learning through presentations and workshops at national conferences and for local school districts.

Lorilei Swanson received a B.A. degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of South Florida and her M. Ed. from Clemson University. As a raft guide and outdoor enthusiast, Lorilei is an advocate of experiential learning for youth. Based upon her experience as primary researcher for this publication, she also conducted a workshop on service learning at the National Dropout Prevention Conference.

Preface

In 1987, shortly after I had taken the job of creating the Governor's Office of Citizen Service in Pennsylvania, ! met Dr. Ernest Boyer at a convention. Boyer was and is a strong and consistent advocate for community service, having urged its use in his books *High School and College*. I approached him after his lecture and asked him how service learning might best be spread. He paused, smiled and said, "Tell good stories."

I began to collect stories—many of them about students at risk of dropping out. Diane Scott, principal of Overbrook High School in Philadelphia, told me how she assigned her 120 most at-risk 9th graders a three-hour-per-week community service placement and how attendance rates subsequently jumped from 70 percent to 89 percent. Patty Goldstein, director of Project Success, a program for dropout-prone youth in Reading, Pennsylvania, told me about a class whose grade point average rose from 2.1 to 2.8 following the introduction of a community service component. Joel Vanucci, dean of Students at Keystone Oaks School District near Pittsburgh, told me how he had seen the number of dropouts decline from 28 per year to 7 and 6 respectively in the two years during which an ambitious, 120-hour community service requirement was installed.

These "good stories" go on and on. They are the reason that many of us are now convinced that service learning is, in the words of the June '91 Phi Delta Kappan's lead story "The Sleeping Giant of School Reform."

At its heart, service learning is not a model or a program. It is a point of view and an ethic. It turns the usual assumptions about kids upside down. Rather than focusing on what kids need and lack, it starts from the assumption that kids are valuable, contributing and useful members of society if we but have the imagination and wit to ask them properly. It builds educational systems from an assumption of worth rather than an assessment of needs. It contends that John Dewey was basically right, that education is "reflection on experience" and that service learning provides a rich, compelling and self-enhancing experiential base on which to build learning.

This story has to be told in many ways and to many audiences. That's why this clearly written, concise and rich little volume is so important. It lays out the basics of service learning in clear terms and places the work of widely scattered advocates and teachers at the fingertips of those concerned with youth at risk. I am certain you will find it a useful pocket guide to unleashing the power of service learning in your school or program.

John Briscoe, Director
PennSERVE
March 27, 1992

Chapter One

"I like the program because I get to help little kids who are falling behind in their work. There are two that are going to pass because I helped them."

Michael, a high school student who tutors elementary at-risk children (Montemayor, 1990).

INTRODUCTION

Middle school students planting shrubs at a day care center. First graders making centerpieces for a senior citizen's luncheon. A tenth grader helping a second grader with math. Ninth graders proposing a carefully designed environmental clean-up project at their city council meeting. What do these activities have in common? Each incorporates service into the learning process.

A grassroots movement involving America's young people as active participants in their communities is gathering momentum. The success of local service learning projects has gained dedicated advocates for youth service activities across the country. Now, with the passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 by Congress and the recommendations of the President's America 2000 initiative, this exemplary learning strategy is also being linked to school reform.

Of even greater significance to those who work with at-risk students, service learning is a potentially powerful dropout prevention tool. Analysis by the National Dropout Prevention Center (Duckenfield, Hamby & Smink, 1990) revealed that twelve strategies were seen to be most successful in dropout prevention. Several of these practices–especially mentoring and tutoring, flexible schedules and alternative programs, school-based management, community and business collaboration, and workforce readiness and career counseling–are strong components of a well-designed school-based service learning program. Other researchers (Peck, Law & Mills, 1989) have determined that successful programs for at-risk youth should incorporate course work which emphasizes practical, real-world problem solving; experiential, hands-on learning; and experiences with responsible and mature adults. These same components are fundamental to service learning programs. Thus, service learning combines the best dropout prevention practices and provides practitioners with an innovative way to reach students at risk.

DEFINITION

At this point, it is important to clearly define terminology. Service learning combines community service with learning activities. It allows:

> "students [to] learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community. [Service learning] is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity. [It] provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities. [It also] enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others (National and Community Service Act of 1990)."

Two points from this definition need to be emphasized. First, students must be engaged in significant, well-planned and genuine service. Second, they must reflect on their experiences of serving others to ensure a complete learning experience. These requirements are vital to a successful service learning program.

RATIONALE

Service learning enriches the lives of all students. This teaching methodology provides developmental opportunities that promote personal, social and intellectual growth, as well as civic responsibility and career exploration. Most young people have critical needs in each of these areas that must be met if they are to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. Many favorable outcomes occur in each developmental area through participation in service learning activities, and these are listed below.

Personal Growth applies to the development of characteristics related to self-improvement and self-actualization.

- **self-confidence and self-esteem**
- **self-understanding**
- **a sense of identity**
- **independence and autonomy**
- **openness to new experiences and roles**

- ability to take risks and accept challenges
- a sense of usefulness and purpose
- personal values and beliefs
- responsibility for one's self and actions
- self-respect

Social Growth includes the social skills which are necessary for relating to others in society.

- communication skills
- interpersonal skills
- leadership skills
- ability to work cooperatively with others
- a sense of caring for others
- a sense of belonging
- acceptance and awareness of others from diverse and multicultural backgrounds
- peer group affiliation

Intellectual Growth encompasses the cognitive skills necessary to enhance academic learning and acquire higher level thinking skills.

- application of knowledge, relevance of curriculum
- problem-solving and decision-making skills
- critical thinking skills
- skills in learning from experience
- use of all learning styles
- development of a positive attitude toward learning

Citizenship refers to the responsibilities of participation in a multicultural society and of citizenship in a democracy.

- **a sense of responsibility to contribute to society**
- **democratic participation (informed citizen, exercises voting privileges)**
- **awareness of community needs**
- **organizational skills**
- **social action skills (persuasion, policy research, petitioning)**
- **empowerment, belief in ability to make a difference**

Preparation for the World of Work are the skills that help students gain work experience and make choices about possible career directions.

- **human service skills**
- **realistic ideas about the world of work**
- **professionalism (dress, grooming, manners)**
- **ability to follow directions**
- **ability to function as a member of a team**
- **reliable working skills (punctuality, consistency, regular attendance)**
- **contacts and references for future job possibilities**

In the past, many of these skills were acquired naturally. It was necessary for young people to contribute economically to their families at a very early age. Adolescents were prepared for adulthood through real work experiences and responsibilities on the farm or in factories (National Crime Prevention Council [NCPC], 1988). Over the past 100 years, dramatic changes have occurred in American society in both the workforce and the family structure. Young people today do not have the same opportunities to become valued members of the community, and they are generally denied the experiences that could prepare them for responsible adulthood. Lack of a meaningful role in society and the existing view of adolescents as problems contribute to the sense of alienation so prevalent among today's youth (Benard, 1990). These two factors set the stage for adolescent participation in high risk behaviors such as dropping out, substance abuse, promiscuity, and delinquency.

Twelve year old James comes home every day to an empty house, usually feeling lonesome, with little interest in doing his homework. One day, bored with TV, James went outside looking for something to do. The other boys in the neighborhood were equally restless, and together they began to roam the streets. They ran into Arthur who offered them some beer he had found in his parents' refrigerator. Everyone had some, and soon the group got rowdy. Somehow things developed into a rock throwing fight, and James was hit over his left eye. He figured he'd have to come up with a pretty good story to tell his mother.

Schools have the potential to create an environment that provides positive alternatives to adolescent risk taking. Because it is accessible to the majority of young people, school is the logical place where intervention programs such as service learning can be implemented. Service learning allows all students to actively participate in a community that truly needs their services. In return, students develop qualities that fulfill many of their developmental needs and prepare them for a successful transition to adulthood. Many at-risk students fail to make this transition because they are more vulnerable to the adverse conditions of our society. Typically, these students come from low income or single parent households; have parents who practice high-risk behaviors; have a history of academic failure; and exhibit low self-esteem (Dryfoos, 1990). The efforts of society to meet the developmental needs of these at-risk students are often insufficient. Schools can fill this void through a revitalized curriculum incorporating service learning for all students with at-risk youth benefiting the most because they have so much more to gain.

Twelve year old Joseph has been spending several of his afternoons with a seven-year old child named Aubrey at the elementary school. Aubrey is having trouble with math, and Joseph has been matched to help him in the school cross-age tutoring program. Joseph has seen how Aubrey looks up to him and values his assistance, and he knows that he is helping Aubrey do well in school. This has made Joseph feel pretty good about himself. When he does get home, his own homework seems more important than it used to. Joseph is finding school a much more pleasant place to be because his own math skills have improved from his tutoring experience.

Chapter Two

INTEGRATING SERVICE LEARNING INTO THE CURRICULUM

Service learning can be integrated into the organizational structure of a school with four progressively complex levels of implementation. Ideally, a school can introduce service learning at the most basic level of implementation and gradually advance to the highest level of implementation as the program experiences success.

Level One: Extracurricular

The first level of implementation incorporates extracurricular service programs. Activities in these programs are voluntary, and students do not receive academic credit or time off from school. For this reason, this level is viewed by many as the purest form of service. Others argue that this level only reaches a few motivated students, usually those who already possess a strong service ethic (Conrad & Hedin, 1987). One type of extracurricular program is an after-school club in which students manage most activities with the help of a faculty advisor. In many high schools, students join the Key Club whose purpose is to serve the needy through various community projects. Another type of extracurricular service program is a volunteer clearinghouse staffed by students and faculty. This kind of program provides information on volunteer service and community involvement opportunities to all interested students. (Conrad and Hedin,1987).

Level Two: Curricular Unit

At the second level of implementation, teachers can introduce service learning to their students without involving new courses or staff. A service learning unit offered through a regular semester course is an example of implementation at this level. Such a curricular unit helps fulfill the academic goals of a particular course, just as a unit on the American Indian would be an academic goal for an elementary social studies class. Teachers can develop service learning projects that complement their course content. A home economics class can sew clothing for a homeless shelter, or an English class can publish a newsletter for the local neighborhood watch organization. One final option at this level is an independent study model in which students serve outside regular classroom hours but receive academic credit. Students must first develop a proposal and set up a project for faculty approval before beginning volunteer hours. For example, a student interested in helping disadvantaged preschool children might propose to teach readiness skills at the local Head Start center.

Level Three: Mandatory or Elective Courses

At the third level of implementation, service learning is a regular class in the school's overall academic program. Although service learning can be an integral part of any academic content area, the most natural place to implement service learning is in a social studies class. The course itself combines the service experience with an ongoing classroom experience. The classroom provides information and skills to assist students in interpreting their service experiences and operating more successfully in their placement (Conrad and Hedin,1987). A typical example is a one semester social studies course meeting two hours per day. Students spend two to four days of the week at the field site and the remainder of the week in class. A two-hour block of time is ideal for a service learning course. This allows enough time at the field site for students to make a significant contribution, eliminates the need for extra staff, and avoids the problem of students missing other classes during their time in the field (Conrad and Hedin,1987).

At both the state and local level, there has been controversy about requiring either service learning courses or hours of service prior to graduation. Service learning courses can be voluntary or mandatory. Mandatory programs can motivate students who would never normally volunteer, contribute more hours of work to the community, and expand the range of a school's educational mission (NCPC, 1988). On the other hand, voluntary programs attract students truly committed to serving others rather than those who do not care to get involved. Voluntary programs are also more manageable because fewer students participate (NCPC, 1988).

Level Four: School-Wide Integration

The final and highest level of implementation is community service as a school-wide theme. A variation of this level of implementation is a community service focus in an entire school district. This approach to integrating service into the academic curriculum is rare but highly desirable. In this type of school or district, service to others is woven into many courses and serves as an organizing principle for the total academic program (Conrad and Hedin, 1987). The school itself is organized to serve the community and the curriculum centers on addressing the real issues of the community (Cairn & Kielsmeier, 1991). As an example, students from several classes could serve the local nursing home in unique ways applicable to their course content. Science students could teach nutrition to the elderly; English students could write letters to an adopted grandparent; and industrial arts students could build ramps for the handicapped. This level of implementation has the potential to reach all students rather than a few motivated students who choose to become community service providers (Conrad and Hedin, 1987).

Chapter Three

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF SERVICE LEARNING

There are three essential components of a service learning program at all levels of implementation. The curriculum content of a service learning program must consist of preparation for service, the service activity itself and reflection on the service experience.

PREPARATION

Preparation consists of the learning activities that take place prior to a student's volunteer work. Positive outcomes of service learning are not automatic. Students need guidance and support before they are sent out into the community to serve. Prior to the service experience, students must understand what is expected of them as well as what they can expect from the service project.

Identifying and Analyzing the Problem

The first step of preparation involves assessing the needs of the local community as well as the interests of the student participants. It is critical that the students themselves are involved in the process of identifying the problems and social issues in their community. They can do this by researching the agencies in the community, conducting interviews with the experts in the community, surveying teachers and students to identify problems in their school, and making site visits to observe community problems and efforts to alleviate them (Maryland Student Service Alliance [MSSA], 1989b). Examples of social issues in which students may choose to become involved include serving the aging, disabled and disadvantaged; preventing crime, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy; and saving the environment.

Selecting and Planning the Project

After gathering the necessary background information, students select the project that they would like to work on. The service experience becomes more meaningful if they have chosen and developed the project themselves. Brainstorming is one method frequently used to generate ideas to resolve the problem they have selected. Decisions to be made include the kind of service students will provide, the location where students will serve, and the amount of time and resources that students will contribute to the service project.

Training

An effective service learning program has a well-planned system for training students. Training ensures that the students get the most from their service experience and contribute the most to their community (NCPC, 1988). Training can occur in a number of settings for a varied amount of time. An ongoing semester course, a weekend retreat, or a one-time meeting are a few of the options. Role plays, initiative games, video presentations, guest speakers, and assigned research topics are methods that make training more exciting and memorable. Training consists of orientation to the agency being served, building of skills needed to perform the service, and follow-up and closure procedures (Boyce & Cairn, 1991).

The initial orientation meeting serves as an icebreaker by introducing students to the people with whom they will be working and the agency they will be serving. It is also an appropriate time to familiarize students with the project procedures, expectations and responsibilities. Orientation

provides students with the opportunity to ask questions and explores potential experiences and issues that they may encounter during their service (Boyce and Cairn, 1991)

Certain skills may need to be acquired before actual participation. General service skills include cooperation, communication, organization, responsibility, problem solving, and awareness of working with special populations. The service project may also require that participants learn techniques that require hands-on experience. Technical skills include learning how to take water samples, certification in CPR, or learning the correct way to push a wheelchair.

Training is an ongoing process; it continues until the completion of the service project. Follow up occurs every time there is contact between the supervisor and the student. It is a time to address problems, raise important questions, enhance learning, and improve the performance of students (Boyce and Cairn, 1991). At some point all service projects end, and closure becomes important. Closure helps participants formally deal with the issues that surface when a service relationship is over. It is also a time to recognize the accomplishments of each student and celebrate a job well done.

ACTION

Action is the actual service of caring for others performed by the student participating in the service project. The service itself must be engaging, challenging and meaningful (MSSA, 1989b). There must be a real need in the community for the service, and students must play a significant role in designing the service experience (Cairn and Keilsmeier, 1991). It may also be necessary to adjust the initial service plan as new information is gained and new circumstances are encountered (MSSA, 1989b). Students can participate in service activities through direct service, indirect service, and civic action.

Direct Service

Direct service requires personal contact with people in need. This type of service is generally the most rewarding for students because they receive immediate positive feedback during the process of helping others. Examples of direct service are a 12th grade student counseling an incoming 9th grade student or a 5th grade student serving meals at a soup kitchen. "Whenever possible, students should be encouraged to commit to direct service projects that last for several weeks or months. This gives students time to feel they have made a contribution, to develop friendships with the people they are serving and serving with, and to understand better the problem they are working to solve" (MSSA, 1989b).

Indirect Service

Indirect service activities are commonly implemented in schools because they are easy to organize. These activities involve channeling resources to the problem rather than working directly with an individual who may need service. Examples of indirect service activities include participating in a bike-a-thon to raise money for muscular dystrophy patients and collecting cans of food for local disadvantaged families. This type of service may be of the least value to students because they are so far removed from the need and do not directly experience the benefit of their efforts (MSSA, 1989b).

Civic Action

Civic action is a third type of service activity. It is at the very heart of democratic citizenship. Civic action involves working to eliminate the causes of a specific problem and to inform the public about the issues surrounding that problem. Students may petition the local government to provide safe bicycle routes on the city streets, or they may initiate a campaign to bring about public awareness of the school's dropout rate. Young people are very effective in bringing about political change, especially when they feel truly committed to the cause (MSSA, 1989b).

REFLECTION

Reflection is the component that enables students to critically think about their service experience. When students reflect on their experiences, they think about them, write about them, share them with others, and learn from them. Reflection provides a structured opportunity for students to learn from their experiences. It is a skill involving observation and questioning and putting new ideas together to add new meaning to the service experience (Conrad and Hedin., 1987).

Many of the developmental outcomes attributed to service learning are significantly enhanced by the reflection component. There is an overall sense of well-being that occurs when students help others in their community. But without reflection, students simply go through the motions of service, unaffected by the experience or with personal ignorances and biases reinforced (Cairn et al., 1991). Unreflective action does not create responsible citizens able to make wise decisions and understand enduring human concerns. The activities of reflection are necessary for such personal growth to take place (Maryland Student Service Association [MSSA], 1989a).

There are several principles characteristic of quality reflection. For significant learning and effective service to occur, reflection must be well structured and have clear objectives. Activities can be well planned yet flexible enough to allow learning to happen spontaneously. Quality reflection must be an interactive, interesting and ongoing process. Students are involved in reflection throughout the service experience, from beginning to end.

A major purpose of school-based service learning is to connect real world experiences gained through service to the classroom curriculum. Curriculum-based reflection must employ a variety of methods to meet the unique needs of each student and his or her service experience. The tools to facilitate classroom reflection include discussion, reading, writing, and various student developed projects.

Discussion

Discussion involves small groups of students sharing their ideas with each other and talking about the personal meaning of their service experience. Discussion is stimulated through the presentation of a brief statement or reading appropriate for the service in which the student is engaging. Readings chosen for discussion are designed to generate questions and, at times, debate. This method allows students to focus on a particular issue and examine what thoughtful individuals have said about the issues they are now confronting (MSSA, 1989a). To increase awareness of social biases, students may read *The Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft or an excerpt from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. To reflect on the idea of serving others, students may read an excerpt from *Philanthrophy* by Henry David Thoreau or from *Jane Addams' Charitable Effort*. These readings encourage students to discuss their reactions with each other and also open the door to further inquiry and action.

Reading

A classroom reading assignment associated with the community service project greatly enriches the students' learning experience. This method differs from discussion in that an entire literary work is read rather than a brief excerpt. High school students can read *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson or elementary students can have *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss read to them to enhance service associated with an environmental project.

Writing

Writing is a natural outgrowth of discussion and assigned reading. Writing can include letters, essays, stories, newspapers, and journals. Journal writing is an excellent way for students to explore their service experience on a very personal level. Keeping a regular journal enables students to think about what is happening as a result of their service experience. It causes them to gain insight into understanding themselves and how they relate to others. Questions are helpful in directing the students' work beyond the obvious observations. The National Crime Prevention Council (1988) provides excellent examples of guided journal questions.

- **What was the best thing that happened today at your site? How did it make you feel?**
- **What thing(s) did you like the least about today at your site? What made you dislike it?**
- **What compliments have you received today, and how did they make you feel? What have you learned about yourself and the people you are helping?**
- **How have you changed or grown since you began to volunteer at this site? What have you learned about yourself and the people you are helping?**

Projects

Projects developed by students raise their awareness about issues associated with service. Many methods can be employed to accentuate the skills of each subject area. Projects may vary from posters, plays, and multimedia presentations to political campaigns and research. When students develop their own projects, their creativity is expressed and their learning becomes more meaningful. Middle school students may interview older citizens in their community and document a local oral history. Elementary school students may star in a video on school safety created and directed by high school students.

Chapter Four

THE SERVICE LEARNING CONTINUUM

Service learning can be implemented at all grade levels. When designing a service learning program, it is important to consider the age and the developmental needs of the students involved. Properly organized, service learning activities respond to the special needs of elementary, middle, and high school students.

Elementary School

Elementary school children are uniquely qualified to give love and kindness to individuals in need. One of the most common services in which elementary school children engage is intergenerational work with senior citizens. Elementary school is an excellent time to introduce service learning into the curriculum. When service learning is introduced at an early age, the foundation is laid for students to develop a lifetime ethic of serving the community (Cairn et al., 1991). Service can begin at a very simple level appropriate to the developmental needs of the elementary school age child. As the child matures and later enters middle school and high school, the complexity of service increases accordingly.

Service learning fulfills the following needs of young children:

- **the need for belonging and approval by the group**
- **the need for a sense of personal competence and self-worth**
- **the need to be accepted for their own uniqueness**
- **the need for affection and acceptance by peers and adults**
- **the need for the opportunity to assume independence and responsibilities**
- **the need for the opportunity to assume different roles**
- **the need for challenging experiences at the child's level of ability**
- **the need to participate in creative, nonconforming activities**
- **the need to intellectually successful and satisfying experiences**

When second graders color pictures and play games with members of a nursing home, they learn about getting along with older adults. They also begin to discover the special qualities about themselves that make them unique. When third graders volunteer to read to students in the first grade, they build confidence in themselves and learn about responsibility. Fifth graders in a service learning class can take field trips in their community to identify areas of need and learn more about their community. These students begin to learn about the responsibilities of citizenship, and they become aware of opportunities in their community. They also learn to make choices and decisions as they identify community problems they wish to resolve.

Middle School

The developmental changes that occur during early adolescence make middle school an especially effective time to implement service into the curriculum. It is a time of great change in which youth are vulnerable to many influences, especially those of their peers. Early adolescence can be a turning point for many youth, a time when they make choices that set them up for a lifetime of success or failure. Service learning provides positive experiences that significantly affect the attitudes, decisions, and subsequent behavior of middle school students at this critical time in their lives. These students learn about their responsibility to contribute to others and begin to feel valued and accepted for their meaningful participation in their community. This involvement has the potential to prevent many of the problems characteristic of the low achieving student and the high school dropout. Service learning also helps adolescents develop the strength of character or resiliency necessary to withstand negative peer pressures (Rolzinski, 1990).

Service learning activities uniquely meet the following developmental needs of early adolescents.

- **to feel accepted by peers and others**
- **to see concrete outcomes from their efforts**
- **to have opportunities for creative expression**
- **to have opportunities for self-definition**
- **to participate and be part of a group**
- **to learn decision-making through experience**
- **to explore adult roles and career opportunities**
- **to interact with people of diverse backgrounds**
- **to engage in physical activity**
- **to take risks within a structured environment**
- **to gain competence and achievement**
- **to make a difference in the community**

Sixth graders who petition to prevent a free flowing river from being dammed learn that they can make a difference and achieve positive results from their efforts. A "teach an adult to read" program organized by seventh graders teaches students lifelong attitudes toward working and sharing with others. A variety of roles are explored when eighth graders volunteer to answer phones at a fund-raiser for the local public television station or coach a co-ed soccer team for disadvantaged youth.

High School

High school students are on their way to entering the adult world and need the challenge of service learning activities to prepare them for this transition. There are numerous opportunities available in local communities that help students prepare for adulthood. Unfortunately many students are not aware of these opportunities. They are often isolated from the active adult community and have unrealistic views about their roles as adults (NCPC, 1988). Service learning allows all students, not just the honor roll student, to play a constructive role in the community and begin to learn the responsibilities of adulthood.

The following developmental needs of high school students center around the preparation for adulthood, citizenship, and the world of work (Herr, 1991).

- **to become self-reliant and achieve psychological independence from their parents**
- **to expand peer relationships and achieve the capacity for responsible intimate relationships**
- **to learn how to manage time and personal health**
- **to formulate a personal value system**
- **to assume responsibility for career planning and its consequences**
- **to develop skills important to life as a consumer and for effective use of leisure time**
- **to develop citizenship skills important to responsible participation in a democratic society**

High school students who participate in homebuilding through the local Habitat for Humanity organization learn how communities can work together to help its members. These same students learn about political participation when they petition to save a historic mill and have the local government develop it into low cost housing. Students involved in a peer tutoring program with low achieving students learn important social and academic skills. When these student volunteers recognized that many of their peers did poorly in school because of personal problems, they initiated a student hotline. Hotline volunteers helped fellow students cope with problems and at the same time learned effective communication skills. These examples demonstrate how students involved in service learning activities can make a real difference in their communities and continually seek personal growth through a lifetime of serving others.

SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES K-12

The previous section outlined the importance of matching the service experience to the appropriate developmental level of each student participant. The chart on the next page illustrates how students at all levels can participate in service activities for a community beautification project.

SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES CHART FOR GRADES K-12

PRIMARY (K-2)

- Make signs announcing a school recycling center.
- Help third graders sort and weigh recycled material.
- Pick up trash around the school grounds.

UPPER ELEMENTARY (3RD-5TH)

- Organize the school recycling center and arrange for collection.
- Assist primary students in making recycling signs and collecting recycled products.
- Write textbook companies and ask them to use recycled paper.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (6TH-8TH)

- Adopt a two mile section of highway in front of the school to keep free of litter.
- Rake leaves and shovel snow for local disabled and elderly population.
- Petition to ban styrofoam from the school district's lunchroom.

HIGH SCHOOL (9TH-12TH)

- Initiate a Community Beautification Committee with monthly meetings for new ideas and projects.
- Persuade local government to set up regular recycling collection sites.
- Organize community-wide Adopt-A-Highway project.

Chapter Five

SERVICE LEARNING RESEARCH

Advocates view service learning as an important and necessary component in the education of American youth today. What interests those of us involved in dropout prevention is its obvious potential to make a significant difference in the lives of at-risk youth. Quantitative studies documenting the effectiveness of service learning in preventing dropouts per se have not yet been made. There is, however, a sound base of research on several measurable variables which support our claim that service learning is good dropout prevention.

Conrad and Hedin's (1991) extensive review of the qualitative research on youth service programs indicates that participation in service learning fosters social, personal, and academic development. In the area of social development, researchers report that participants gain a heightened sense of personal and social responsibility and have more positive attitudes toward adults and others. Personal developmental outcomes show more active exploration of careers, enhanced self-esteem, and growth in moral and ego development by participants. Intellectual outcomes include greater mastery of skills and content directly related to the experiences of the participants and more complex patterns of thought. In summary, academic learning, problem-solving skills, self-esteem, attitudes toward others, and social responsibility are positively affected by a service learning experience, especially when the service experience is followed by reflection.

Qualitative evidence is abundant, with both practitioners and participants consistently praising the worth of service learning. In addition to anecdotal accounts by practitioners, the dimensions of learning taking place are revealed in student journals. Here is where the obvious developmental gains are vividly documented by the students themselves as they give testimony to their service learning experiences.

This commentary from a 5th grader who planted flowers at a home for the elderly illustrates that beginning service learning in elementary school develops self-esteem as it lays a solid foundation for future service.

> *It was really fun. I really got into my work. I talked with a lady. . . .She was really nice. The lady was really glad that we helped her. I think our class did a great job. I want to keep helping people that are old (Generator 10(2),1990).*

A middle school student spent part of each school day at a local retirement community in educational and recreational activities with the senior citizens in residence. Her journal entry eloquently expressed the impact of the service activity on her life.

> *This program has really made a difference in my life. It is something really different, I mean it's not like getting 100% on a test or having someone tell you that you look nice today. It's a deeper, more important feeling that I've gained. Maybe it has to do with inspiration and knowing what I can make of my life if I just keep trying like these people have (National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence [NCSLEA], 1991).*

A high school girl experienced substantial growth from her service project, Adopt-a-Cub, a cross-age tutoring program with disadvantaged elementary children. After listening to the little girl who was her "cub" tell about her mother being shot by a boyfriend, she wrote in her journal:

> *What was I supposed to say? But then I realized I didn't need to say anything and needed simply to listen. So that's what we did. We talked and listened, sharing stories and secrets, and slowly but surely formed a bond between us that now would be unbreakable (W. Wilson, personal communication, February 1992).*

The journal writer acknowledges their common humanity as she continues:

> *In many ways, we're a lot alike—writing comes much easier than talking. So together we work things out on paper. And by doing that, we create a written record of our very special friendship (W. Wilson, personal communication, February 1992).*

Participating in an 8th grade project which works on community service projects, an at-risk student noted:

> *I like it because you can make things and be with other people and go to other schools and meet people. . . . We made a nature trail for classes outside for elementary students. . . . Some kids have other programs, but this is all I have. I missed a lot of school last year. I have better attendance this year, and I like working here (Rolzinski, 1990).*

This student exhibits a growth in personal and social development. In addition, her attitude towards school has improved.

Think of the responsibility that has been instilled in a high school student volunteer in an ambulance crew who states:

In school you learn chemistry and biology and stuff and then forget it as soon as the test is over. Here you've got to remember because somebody's life depends on it. (Generator 11(3), 1991)

Viewed from either perspective, quantitative or qualitative, the integration of service learning into the school curriculum has been shown to be an extremely effective strategy in meeting the many developmental needs of all students.

CONCLUSION

It is time to embrace the concept of service learning in order to incorporate it with comprehensive efforts in dropout prevention. Research indicates that a positive outcome for participants in this multifaceted learning experience is likely. Service learning is a teaching methodology that revitalizes the classroom and provides the kind of learning and experiences students need to lead a successful life.

PUBLICATIONS

Although not cited as references in this report, the following publications are excellent resources on the topic of service learning.

Cairn, R. W. & Cairn, S. (1991). Collaborators: Schools and communities working together for youth service. Roseville, MN: National Youth Leadership Council.

Erickson, J. B. (1991). Directory of american youth organizations 1992-1993. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Florida Department of Education. (1992). Learning by serving. Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Kinsley, C. (Ed). (1991). Whole learning through service: A guide for integrating service into the curriculum, kindergarten through eighth grade. Springfield, MA: Community Service Learning Center.

Lewis, A. C. (1988). Facts and faith: A status report on youth service. Washington, DC: William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizen ship.

Lewis, B. A. (1991). The kid's guide to social action. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Lewis, B. A. (1992). Kids with courage. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Maryland Student Service Alliance.(1990). The courage to care, the strength to serve. [Video]. Baltimore, MD: Author.

Parsons, C. (1991). Service learning from A to Z. Chester, VT: Vermont Schoolhouse Press.

Nathan J. & Kielsmeier, J. (Eds.). (1991) Youth service [Special issue]. Phi Delta Kappan, 72(10).

Schine, J. (1989). Young adolescents and community service. Washington, DC: The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.

ORGANIZATIONS

The organizations listed are excellent resources for developing service learning programs.

The Association for Experiential Education
University of Colorado
Box 249
Boulder, CO 80309
303-492-1547

Commission on National and
Community Service
The National Press Building
529 14th Street NW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20033-0119
202-724-0600

Community Service Learning Center
258 Washington Blvd.
Springfield, MA 01108
413-734-6857

Constitutional Rights Foundation
601 South Kingsley Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90005
213 487-5590

Maryland Student Service Alliance
The Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2595
301-333-2427

National Center for Service Learning in
Early Adolescence
25 West 43rd Street, Room 620
New York, NY 10036-8099
212-642-2947

National Crime Prevention Council
733 15th Street, NW
Suite 540
Washington, DC 20005
202-393-7141

National Service Secretariat
5140 Sherier Place, N. W.
Washington, DC 20016
202-244-5828

National Society for Internships and
Experiential Education
3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 207
Raleigh, NC 27609-7229
919-787-3262

National Youth Leadership Council
1910 West County Road B
Roseville, MN 55113
612-631-3672

PennSERVE
The Governor's Office of Citizen Service
333 Market Street, 10th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126
717-787-1971

Youth Service America
1319 F St. NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004
202-783-8855

REFERENCES

Benard, B. (1990, January). Youth service: from youth as problems to youth as resources. Prevention Forum, pp. 6-14.

Boyce, K., & Cairn, R. W. (1991). Orientation and training. The Generator, 11(3), 6.

Cairn, R. W., & Kielsmeier, J. C. (Eds.). (1991). Growing hope: A sourcebook on integrating youth service into the school curriculum. Roseville, MN: National Youth Leadership Council.

Conrad, D., & Hedin, D. (1991). School-based community service: What we know from research and theory. Phi Delta Kappan, 72(10), 743-749.

Conrad, D., & Hedin, D. (1987). Youth service: A guidebook for developing and operating effective programs. Washington, DC: Independent Sector.

Dryfoos, J. G. (1990). Adolescents at risk: Prevalence and prevention. New York: Oxford University Press.

Duckenfield, M., Hamby, J. V., & Smink, J. (1990). Effective strategies for dropout prevention. Clemson, SC: The National Dropout Prevention Center.

Herr, E. (1991). Guidance and counseling: A shared responsibility. Alexandria, VA: National Association of College Admission Counselors.

Humphrey, J. N., & Humphrey, J. H. (1989). Child development during the elementary school years. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Maryland Student Service Alliance. (1989a). Courage to care, the strength to serve: Reflections on community service. Annapolis, MD: CZM Press.

Maryland Student Service Alliance. (1989b). Draft instructional framework in community service. Baltimore: Maryland State Department of Education.

Montemayor, A. M. (1990). Valued youth partnerships: programs in caring. San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Association.

National and Community Service Act of 1990.

National Crime Prevention Council. (1988). Reaching out: School-based community service programs. Washington, DC: Author.

National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence. (1991). Connections: Service learning in the middle grades. New York: Author.

Olson, D. (Ed.). (1990). Summer walkabout 1990. The Generator, 10(2), 4.

Peck, N., Law, A., & Mills, R. C. (1989). Dropout prevention: what we have learned. Ann Arbor, MI: ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse.

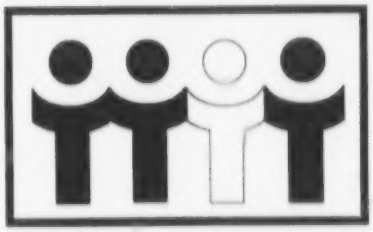
Rolzinski, C. A. (1990). The adventure of adolescence: Middle school students and community service. Washington, DC: Youth Service America.

Scales, P. C. (1991). A portrait of young adolescents in the 1990s. Carrboro, NC: Center for Early Adolescence.

Service Learning: Meeting the Needs of Youth at-Risk© is part of a series of dropout prevention research reports published by the National Dropout Prevention Center. Additional copies may be ordered. The Center has produced a variety of other products which can be helpful to those who work with at-risk youth.

To obtain a complete list of publications and prices call or write:

Publications Department
The National Dropout Prevention Center
205 Martin Street
Clemson University
Clemson, South Carolina 29634-5111
(803) 656-2599



A Publication of the National Dropout Prevention Center